

Trauma-Sensitive Teachers

PARENT-TEACHER PARTNERSHIP

Survival

The holidays are here and our students are triggered. You most likely are gearing up for conference week, early release days, and winter break. So much change happening in such a short amount of time. As we began the month bringing your student's "person," the one who cooks them dinner at night, into the classroom in order to keep them real, alive, and thought about through our day, it is just as important to make ourselves a real person. We can use our interests and favorites, in the same manner as we did for their person. This will allow us to point out similarities between us and their person, making brain connections that we too are safe and have similarities to their person. It will also help when we are away from our students during winter break, and other break periods. Parents can refer to us, as we will send a copy of our interest pages home with them, and a letter to explain how they can keep us alive in their child's life. This will, in turn, help ease that transition back into school after break. Since we were not just someone who vanished into the night, but in fact we are a person who is also on a break and since they will talk about us and see our picture throughout the break, we will be fresh in their minds.

We know transitions are hard. Holidays can often be a reminder of past, scary experiences! We know people have suddenly vanished from their lives, to never be seen again, and that is scary! That triggers them to fight, flight, or freeze. The thought of being away from a teacher, or other caring adult, is different and scary. "When I'm scared, I'm triggered. When I'm scared, I push back, I don't listen, I can't work, and I can't connect with you." Thoughts whirl like, "Will you be back when I come back?" "Are you dead, are you in prison, are you hurt or hurting?" These fear-based thoughts have been reality to our triggered students so keeping ourselves "alive" while they are away from us will help ease these fear-based thoughts that have been our triggered students' reality in the past.

Sending home information about yourself is going to help your students immensely, especially on the return after break. Showing your students that you too have favorites, that you have similarities to their person, and that you are a person outside of school will help to ease separation anxiety and fear-based thoughts...separation from their person, and the separation that happens over break from the teacher. On the return after break, you will have been talked about, seen, and thought about even though you were apart, keeping the image of you fresh in their minds, making the transition back to you and away from their person not as scary.

In order to ease anxiety that happens from transitions and separation from their 'person,' we need to keep both their person and their teacher alive in their mind when they are not with one or the other. As we know, keeping their person alive eases the scary feelings and reminding them that their person will be there for them after school. Keeping yourself alive at home will help ease that transition back to you, because even though you were apart you were not forgotten. They will connect back with you faster than if you weren't talked about, helping them remember they are safe with you, that you care, which in turn helps them stay engaged and learn.

Let's take a look at this tool in action!

Give Directions of Use:

01

Make it: All About You, the Teacher

Make your poster. All about you. Choose the one you sent home with your students for their person. Fill it out and make copies. Send it home with the attached parent letter stating that you would like to keep yourself "alive" at home, just like we keep the parent/person alive at school.

02

Post it:

Ask parents to post their copy in a frequented part of their home, such as the fridge, or on their child's bedroom door - some place that it will be seen every day, multiple times a day.

03

Reference it:

Encourage your parents to reference your poster at least one time a day, and to reference you as many times possible.

Example

Using a ‘getting to know you,’ poster will help your students feel safe, secure and calm to when referenced often throughout the day. Referencing your poster in the same way you reference their posters from home, will help them connect similarities between yourself and their person.

Re-cap

Sending home something as this might seem difficult, and weird, but just do the best you can. The parents that understand why we do these things will appreciate the effort to ease their child’s anxiety. The parents who don’t understand may simply buy you the best holiday teacher gift ever because they now know your favorite things.



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